

Amendment to the Claims

Claims 1 and 2 (canceled).

3. (Currently amended) In an anchoring assembly for insertion in skeletal bone, said anchoring assembly having a linking member having a threaded first end for engaging a securing nut and a tapered second end;

a bone-engaging member having a first end adapted to engage said bone and a second end comprising a retention cavity constructed and arranged to engage said linking member second end, said retention cavity having a substantially-spherical exterior surface and a circular open mouth,

the improvement comprising said retention cavity has a spherical inside wall, said wall narrowing toward said circular mouth;

a bracing device in said retention cavity for ~~selectively maintaining said linking member second end in a chosen orientation~~ universal movement within said retention cavity, said bracing device in the form of a split retention ring having a diameter greater than the diameter of said circular open mouth, said split retention ring mounted within said circular mouth of said retention cavity, said split retention ring comprising a main body having a tapered aperture therethrough and a gap, the tapered aperture being complementary to said taper of said linking member ~~spherical~~ second end, thereby preventing removal of said linking member second end from within said retention cavity, and adapted to frictionally engage said linking member second end;

whereby tightening of said securing nut draws said linking member second end

against said split retention ring forcing said split retention ring along said narrowing spherical inside wall reducing said gap and applying progressive pressure on said linking member and selectively prevents relative motion between said linking member and said bone-engaging member.

4. (Original) In an anchoring assembly of claim 3, wherein said first end of said bone-engaging member has screw threads to engage said bone.

5. (Currently amended) In an anchoring assembly for use with a spinal fixation system, said spinal fixation system including at least one spine stabilizing rod and at least one connector adapted to selectively engage said at least one stabilizing rod;

a linking member having a threaded first end and a tapered second end, said threaded first end being sized to engage said connector;

a bone-engaging member having a first end adapted to engage said bone and a second end comprising a retention cavity constructed and arranged to engage said linking member second end, said retention cavity having a substantially-spherical interior surface and exterior surface;

a locking means for attaching said linking member second end to said connector;

the improvement comprising a bracing device resiliently disposed in said retention cavity for ~~selectively maintaining~~ universal movement of said linking member second end in a chosen orientation within said retention cavity, said bracing device in the form of a split retention ring, said retention ring having a substantially spherical exterior surface, said interior surface of said retention ring forming a tapered aperture,

exterior surface, said interior surface of said retention ring forming a tapered aperture, said exterior surface of said retention ring complementary to said interior surface of said retention cavity, said tapered aperture complementary to said tapered second end of said linking member, said bracing member positioned between said tapered second end and said interior surface of said retention cavity;

whereby said bracing device prevents relative motion between said anchoring assembly and said connector once said anchoring assembly and said connector have been arranged in a spinal-curve-correcting orientation.

Claims 6 and 7 (canceled).